

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Laurel LaPorte-Grimes. I'm a resident of Manchester and a founding organizer of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester and CT Mutual Aid East of the River. I am testifying today in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4.

As a community member involved in a local mutual aid network here in Manchester (and surrounding communities), I have seen first-hand the detrimental impact of rent increases and no-fault evictions on many of our families. One of our families, in particular, was given an eviction notice (no fault) just a month or two before giving birth. They did everything they could to find a similar place with a similar rent, but ultimately they were unsuccessful. Bringing a new life into the world can be a joyful experience, however, it also requires a lot of preparation and can carry with it a tremendous amount of stress. This particular mom is also a woman of color, and so her pregnancy already carried a disproportionately higher risk of complications and death; the last thing she needed as she prepared for her new infant was the additional stress of frantically searching for a new apartment, while simultaneously preparing to potentially put all their things in storage and be unhoused. Ultimately, not long after she gave birth, this family did need to leave their apartment and move into a hotel, and the last I heard from them, they remain unhoused. This is just one of the examples of families in crisis in our community, because they cannot afford rent increases that far outpace any cost of living increase they may have received.

And the truth is that many of our families are not getting even minimal cost of living increases and are spending a tremendous percentage of their wages on rent. The numbers show that approximately 52% of CT renters are spending more than 30% of their gross monthly income on rent, and these data are borne out in the lives of the families in our mutual aid network. There is an impression that folks that need help in our community are not working, but the families that I know are working extremely hard, and yet paying their rent remains one of their biggest challenges. Every time someone asks for help with their rent, our communal hearts drop, because we know that they will need this help consistently, and because our resources as a local mutual aid organization are so stretched that we will not be able to provide as much help as they need.

According to the 2010 US Census, Connecticut is the richest state in the nation in terms of per capita income. In such a wealthy state, we should be able to craft legislation that allows renters to be guaranteed some stability. Allowing families to be able to count on having a stable address is not only beneficial for that family, it also benefits the larger community. Economically, when a family that is already spending a large percentage of their income on rent is able to count on that not increasing by too much every year, then they are more likely to be able to afford food, pay their medical bills, and be able to access other necessities. Having access to basic necessities reduces stress and leads to better physical and mental outcomes, and having our neighbors feel better is better for us all. Additionally, the more people are able to have stable housing, the more they can establish connections and put down roots, and the greater investment and engagement they will have in their community, leading to stronger communities for us all. Not only that, but in communities where we are already working to solve issues of people being unhoused, it just makes sense

to do everything we can to ensure that people who are currently paying rent will be able to continue to pay their rent and remain in their home.

When it comes down to it, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that people have a place to live. Legislation like HB 6588, is a good step in that direction, especially with some additional language to strengthen it. I strongly support a rent cap, especially one that:

- **is set at 2.5 to 3%**, which tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and is affordable and predictable for tenants
- **covers apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent, and
- **expands good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

Please pass SB 4 with these additional provisions, and I thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted in community,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD
Manchester, CT